

Tuesday, November 25, 2003

EDITORIAL

Students have many common opportunities to appreciate

Like every year, the University has carved out a short vacation — the Thanksgiving holiday — for students, starting Thursday. Most of us will get in a car or bus or train or plane and brave traffic (ground or air) for a four-day weekend to kick back, spend time with family or friends, feast upon the great autumnal cornucopia and (hopefully) not whittle away all of it doing homework.

But, wherever our long weekend takes us and however we choose to spend it, we shouldn't forget that we all — regardless of backgrounds, creeds or political beliefs — have many common things to be thankful for.

Most readers of this editorial are likely college students, but that is by no means the norm. While more than half of American high school graduates enroll in colleges of some kind, only a small percentage of people worldwide enjoy the many potent benefits of participating in higher education. Though we might sometimes lament the drudgery of homework, midterms and finals, at the end of the day we should be thankful for the opportunity to extend our education because, after all, knowledge is power.

Likewise, we should appreciate the blessings of living in America. Not only do most Americans rarely worry about having enough to eat or how warm they'll be at night, but we also enjoy more robust civil liberties than most people around the world and throughout history ever have. While being thankful for these benefits, however, we should at the same time remember that many people do not enjoy them — even in this nation, many will go hungry on Thanksgiving.

Reflection alone, however, will not spare these problems; accordingly, it is important to fight hunger, disease and poverty within our borders and abroad.

There are, on a lighter note, many other things for which we can give thanks this holiday season.

We should give thanks that the Ducks could remind Beaver fans of our school's obvious superiority at this weekend's Civil War game. We should give further thanks that the vast majority of attendees at the Civil War (but regrettably not all) chose not to dress up as one-man Dadaist art show Michael Jackson.

Also, we should appreciate having at least one day guaranteed to be free of Top Ramen lunches, Kraft dinners, and Go-gurt desserts.

And finally, not that anyone reading this will forget, we should all give thanks for the upcoming four days of vacation — or five days, if your rocking professors give you Wednesday off. We also give thanks that while we're all presumptuously planning to do all our prep work for finals and big end-of-term projects, we obviously won't.

EDITORIAL POLICY

This editorial represents the opinion of the Emerald editorial board. Responses can be sent to letters@dailyemerald.com. Letters to the editor and guest commentaries are encouraged. Letters are limited to 250 words and guest commentaries to 550 words. Authors are limited to one submission per calendar month. Submission must include phone number and address for verification. The Emerald reserves the right to edit for space, grammar and style.

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ATTACKED BY FAME

Hey, kiddies! Wanna get famous? Just get your arm bitten off by a massive Hawaiian shark!

Ask Bethany Hamilton. The teenage surfer got her left arm bitten off by a 15-foot tiger shark on Halloween, and now she's more famous than Elvis! She's 13 and she's from Hawaii, but she's been on talk shows and news programs from New York to Los Angeles. There's a Bethany book in the works. She's thinking about launching a clothing line.

So will all the shirts have only one sleeve?

I'm sorry, that was a really insensitive joke. And I don't mean to be insensitive about the situation as a whole, but it's sort of a sad statement about our society. In our stop-to-watch-the-car-crash culture, it's easier to shed a tear for a shark-attack victim than to think about, say, the fact that 290 American soldiers (as of press time) have died in Iraq since Operation Iraqi Freedom "ended" on May 1.

You've probably heard Hamilton's story. Before the attack she was one of the youngest pro surfers on the scene and was sponsored by Rip Curl. On the morning of Oct. 31, she hit the Kauai North Shore waves with a few friends. The attack itself lasted three seconds. Hamilton's friends took her to shore and used a surfboard leash as a tourniquet. At the hospital, a man was about to go in for knee surgery but gave up his bed for



Peter Hockaday
 Today is Hockaday

the 13-year-old. That man was Bethany's father, Tom Hamilton.

It's a fascinating story, to be sure. And Hamilton has handled the media crush with the poise of a 33-year-old, not a scrub-faced teenager. She told The Associated Press the attack was "God's plan for my life, and I'm going to go with it." If I got my arm bitten off by a shark, I'd be using stronger words. And most of them would be four letters long.

But at the same time, she and her family are handling it like a farmer with his hands on the udders. They're milking it. The family hired a Los Angeles-based entertainment agent to help handle the media blitz. Besides the book and clothing line, Hamilton is scheduled for speaking appearances and there's even a reality show brewing.

"Joe Disability?"
 Again, I'm sorry. That's the last bad joke. Promise.

I understand she needs some money.

Her family has medical insurance, but it won't cover things like new prosthetic arms for the growing girl. So, to a certain extent, the media assault has a purpose. But a reality show? A clothing line? And on top of that, Hamilton has also benefited from several fund-raisers. A fundraiser on Kauai raised \$70,000 on Nov. 15, and on Saturday, Rip Curl will auction off 16 signed surfboards to raise even more money.

Not to mention that Hamilton was a top pro surfer before the bite and will likely remain at the top using a prosthetic.

Sorry, but shouldn't we be raising money for people who really need it? Like, say, the 8.8 million unemployed people in this country? The 8.8 million people who don't surf for a living and aren't given SUV-sized checks every weekend?

What happened to Hamilton was a tragedy. But that's how it should be treated. I shouldn't be able to make donations, using PayPal, on her Web site. I shouldn't have to watch her being treated like a celebrity on Leno and Letterman.

That's my slant and I'm sticking to it. Until, of course, I get my arm bitten off by a shark and I become famous. In America, that's how easy it is.

Contact the columnist at peterhockaday@dailyemerald.com. His opinions do not necessarily represent those of the Emerald.

Don't disregard practical speech

Yolanda King's speech was quoted ("King inspires, shares dream with Eugene," ODE, Oct. 23) saying, "Because Rose Parks chose to stand up that day by remaining seated, she started a movement," a "movement that had far-reaching effects for Americans" where those who give lip service to racial equality are expected "to walk the walk." To stand up and start a walking movement by sitting down is a kind of metaphysical acrobatics worthy of a speech in Eugene. MLK took as a watchword for the cause Rosa Parks' statement, "I was tired," applying it to how blacks felt in general.

The article recounts, "The city renamed Centennial Boulevard as Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard after extensive public debate on the change." We could have used more debate on the renaming. It could run afoul of the courts. MLK's father visiting Germany was so impressed by the church reformer Martin Luther that he changed his name and his son's name to Martin Luther King. The erosion of symbols with religious overtones will likely get to church reformers and someone will need a test case. Eugene provides one

ready made as our Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard comes right up to the shadow of the erstwhile cross on Skinner's Butte, which although was voted by the citizens of Eugene a war memorial, the courts decided was a religious symbol and had to come down.

GUEST COMMENTARY

If we have to change the name of Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard, every road in the nation named for King will have to follow suit, and Eugene will get a reputation of being either the most racist city in the nation or the stupidest. We burn crosses by removing them.

In his "Letter From Birmingham Jail," King responded to the criticism of his breaking the law by saying he was in favor of the law promoting school integration, which a lot of people were not following, and he was willing to obey just laws but not the unjust ones. He admits, though, that breaking the law is a strange way to promote the law. Well, the autobiography of Lionel "Hamp"

Hampton has brought out the behind-the-scenes manipulation by President Eisenhower at the behest of the NAACP, of the Supreme Court in that ruling against segregation.

So let's see. Desegregation was the just law King was following as opposed to unjust ones, but even Eisenhower admits he pressured the Court in a way he was not supposed to, and the NAACP who did the behind-the-scenes number now wants to honor King, who thought it strange to break laws to promote them. I know that living in Eugene means that not everything we do has to make sense, but give me a metaphysical cross on the hill or seat on the bus any day.

I vaguely remember a country song, "I don't care if it rains or freezes / Long as I got my plastic Jesus / On the dashboard of my car." Do we disregard practical ways to please God and relate to our fellow man, where the rubber meets the road, just because we have a plastic Jesus on the dashboard and a King's name on a road sign?

Earl Gosnell lives in Eugene.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Voter pamphlet is necessary for low-income individuals

The 2004 election will be the 100th anniversary of the Oregon Voter Pamphlet being published and provided for all eligible voters. The \$1.2 million publication cost, which was previously provided by taxes, has first lost funding and second lost support to become self-sustaining through boosted fees on parties and candidates.

While the Internet will have a free Web site available with the voter pamphlet, all those without Internet access are simply out of luck. While national average of Internet usage has increased, minorities and senior citizens will be among those

representing declines in Internet usage. Those voices of lower income families, minorities and senior citizens will be muffled as Internet access stigmatizes the right to equal representation through educated voting. As one of the trailer states in economic stability, and in light of the \$800 tax increase due to be on the next ballot, Oregon of all states needs to have this resource because the working and lower classes need to be heard as tax reform continues.

If voter turnout decreases, which is inevitable, our already consumer-oriented society will hear merely those voters who are able to pay the Internet bill every month. Those citizens affected most by tax cuts and increases will have the least input on issues that affect them more than comfortable, high-income families.

The Internet is not an essential requirement for citizenship, last I checked. Maybe the University could donate the necessary funding from the pool of \$90 million to \$130 million headed for the new basketball arena.

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A reminder for smokers

This is just a little reminder to all of the students on campus who smoke. There is a reason why there is a ban on smoking 10 feet from a building entrance, and it is not so that you can smoke 11 feet from a building entrance.

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